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INCOMING TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 PA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
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FM AMEMB-SOV S-N SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9403
INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 4724

E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: SNUM PINS PINT ES
SUBJECT: COHES REPORT FOR MAY 1988

REFS: A) SAN SALVADOR 2443; B) SAN SALVADOR 3362

1. THE SALVADORAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (COHES) HAS JUST DISTRIBUTED "INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN #5" (MAY1988). REFS DESCRIBE ITS PREVIOUS BULLETINS.

2. AS IN THE PAST, THE COHES MAKES KNOWN ITS POLITICAL VIEWS IN ITS INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSIONS: QUOTE THE REPRESSION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE HAS REACHED A LEVEL UNKNOWN IN THE PAST .... THE OBJECT OF THIS REPRESSION IS CLEAR; IT IS ATTEMPTING TO ELIMINATE ALL ORGANIZED CAMPESINOS. AS ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT FACT WE CAN POINT OUT THAT THE NUMBER OF DEATHS OF PRO-OLIGARCHS (THAT IS, ELEMENTS OF THE ARMY, THE SECURITY CORPS, ORDEN, AND OTHER PARA-MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS) IS MUCH HIGHER THAN IN PREVIOUS MONTHS. HIS COMES FROM THE INCREASE IN LEGETIMATE POPULAR RESISTANCE..... THE ATTITUDE OF THE CLASSES IN POWER, THE INTERVENTION OF THE U.S., THE LACK OF ANY DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE, AND THE ATTEMPT TO EXTERMINATE THE POPULAR MOVEMENT FORECLOSE ANY PACIFIC OUTCOME TO THE SALVADORAN CRISIS, LEAVING ARMED STRUGGLE AS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE FOR THE LIBERATION OF OUR PEOPLE ..... END QUOTE.

3. THE TEXT OF BULLETIN #5 IS A DAY BY DAY ACCOUNT OF HAPPENINGS IN MAY. IT MAKES SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO 929 KILLINGS, AND ASSIGNS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER.

-- KILLED BY EXTREME LEFT GROUPS, SICTY-EIGHT.

-- KILLED IN CONFRONTATIONS OR "SO-CALLED CONFRONTATIONS", ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY FIVE.

-- KILLED BY THE MILITARY OR SECURITY CORPS (INCLUDES DEATHS ATTRIBUTED TO "MILITARY OPERATIONS"), THREE HUNDRED TWENTY FIVE.

-- KILLED BY EXTREME RIGHT GROUPS, EIGHTY NINE (EIGHTY FOUR OF THESE ARE ATTRIBUTED TO THE DEATH SQUAD).

-- KILLED BY UNKNOWNS OR IN CIRCUMSTANCES NOT EXPLAINED BY COHES, TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY TWO.

4. GROUPS OF THE EXTREME LEFT HAVE BEEN PUBLICIZING AN ALLEGED MASSACRE OF 600 CAMPESINOS BY SALVADORAN TROOPS ON MAY 14. COHES DESCRIBES THE INCIDENT IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER.

-- ON MAY 13 APPROXIMATELY A THOUSAND MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES CARRIED OUT AN OPERATION IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CUSCATLAN, KILLIN FORTY CAMPESINOS. A SIMILAR OPERATION TOOK PLACE IN NORTHEASTERN CHALATENANGO DEPARTMENT, RESULTING IN A "GREAT NUMBER" OF CAMPESINOS KILLED. A THIRD OPERATION WAS MOUNTED IN NORTHWESTERN CHALAENANGO (NO MENTION OF CASUALTIES).

-- ON MAY 14 THE NATIONAL GUARD AND ARMY ATTACKED THE CAMPESINOS WHO HAD TAKEN REFUGE FROM THE PREVIOUS DAY'S ACTIONS AT YURIQUE, CHALATENANGO, NEAR THE SUMPUL RIVER. "MANY PEOPLE" DROWNED, AND THOSE WHO MANAGED TO CROSS THE RIVER WERE CAPTURED BY HONDURAN SOLDIERS AND RETURNED TO THE SALVADORAN MILITARY. " THE NUMBER OF DEATHS ROSE TO MORE THAN 200."

5. NOTES.

-- IN SPITE OF THE STATEMENT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BULLETIN ABOUT THE RISING NUMBER OF DEATHS AMONG "PRO-OLIGARCHS" MAY'S REPORT LIST FEWER LEFTIST KILLINGS THATN DID APRIL'S. A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THIS MAY LIE IN THE DUAL AUTHORSHIP OF THE BULLETIN -- THE SEGMENTS COVERING MAY 1-13 AND MAY 15-31 APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY DIFFERENT PEOPLE. THE FIRST SEGMENT MENTIONS ABOUT 80 CASUALTIES SUFFERED BY ORDEN, THE MILITARY, AND THE SECURITY FORCES BECAUSE OF EXECUTIONS AND CONFRONTATIONS. THE SECOND MAKES NO REFERENCE TO ANY KILLINGS BY LEFTIST GROUPS OR ANY CASUALTIES SUFFERED BY "PRO-LLIGARCHS".

-- OF THE 929 VICTIMS, ONLY ABOUT 20 ARE IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO LEFTIST GROUPS.

6. COMMENT. BECAUSE OF THEIR EVIDENT POLITICAL BIAS, THE COHES BULLETINS ARE NOT RELIABLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EL SALVADOR. NEVERTHELESS, WE NOTE THAT THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IT DESCRIBES FOR MAY IS SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER THAN IN PREVIOUS MONTHS, AND THIS WOULD STILL HOLD TRUE EVEN IF WE DISCOUNT TWO INCIDENTS IN WHICHITS INFORMATION APPEARS TO BE BASED ON GUESES -- THE 200 DEAD ON MAY 14 AND 100 MORE IN A MAY 17 CONFRONTATION.
WHITE

El Salvador

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